(c) To improve the telephone services in villages, following steps are taken up:—

(i) Induction of WLL (Wireless in Local Loop) as access network.

(ii) Reliable transmission media to all exchanges.

(iii) Conversion of SBM C.DOT switches into RSUs (Remove Switching Units).

(iv) Conversion of 256-Port C.DOT switches into AN-RAXs (Access Network—Rural Automatic Exchanges).

(v) Induction of maintenance free battery sets.

(vi) Replacement of MARR (Multi Access Relay Radio) VPTs (Village Public Telephones) by WLL (Wireless in Local Loop)/ land lines.

(vii) Provision of DSPT (Digital Satellite Phone Terminal) Based VPTs in inaccessible remote areas.

(viii) Booking of telephone faults at SDCC (Short Distance Charging Centre) through IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System).

(ix) Computerization of FRS (Fault Repair Service) at SDCC level.

(x) Finalization of AMC (Annual Maintenance Contract) of WLL equipment.

Improvement of rural roads

*459. DR. T SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to focus on rural roads and the implementation of the National Highways Development Project envisaged by earlier Government would not be provided much financial assistance;

(b) if so, whether 7300 KM which was to be taken up under Rs. 30,000 crores second phase of NHDP, work on only 596 KMs has been completed;

(c) whether Government propose to improve the rural roads instead of National Highways Development Project; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the total rural roads that would be undertaken during 2004-05?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The Government is committed to the implementation of National Highways Development Project (NHDP). There is no proposal to reduce the financial assistance for implementation of NHDP.

(b) Out of 7300 Km. of North-South and East-West corridors being taken up under Phase-ll of the NHDP, works of four laning on 638 Km. has been completed and works on 425 Km. is under implementation. The North-South and East-West corridors are targeted for completion by December 2007.

(c) The Government is committed to improve the rural roads as well as National Highways Development Project.

(d) The number of road works cleared for 2004-05 under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana so far in eight States (Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu) is 2374.

Manpower Export Promotion Council

*460. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:
SHRI SUDARSHAN AKARAPU:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set-up a Manpower Export Promotion Council to regulate hiring practices for overseas jobs;

(b) if so, whether there is proposal to open a nodal office for the Council in Delhi;

(c) whether his Ministry has been asked to set-up a welfare fund for the Indian diaspora in various countries; and

(d) if so, what are other steps Government proposed to take to promote multi-dimensional welfare of NRI including workers of Gulf countries?